

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Thomas Marcellus Denning House**

Albemarle, Stanly County, ST0672, Listed 1/24/2011

Nomination by Davyd Foard Hood

Photographs by Davyd Foard Hood, November 2009



Overall view



Rear view and garage

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Denning, Thomas Marcellus, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 415 North Second Street not for publication

city or town Albemarle vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Stanly code 167 zip code 28002

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling \_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC/secondary structure \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WORK IN PROGRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Spanish Colonial Revival \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Brick \_\_\_\_\_

walls: Brick \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

roof: Terra Cotta \_\_\_\_\_

other: Wood \_\_\_\_\_

Glass \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The Thomas Marcellus Denning House, designed by Charlotte architect Louis Humbert Asbury Sr. in 1924 and completed either in later 1924 or early 1925, is a handsome Spanish Colonial Revival-style two-story brick masonry house that has been an architectural landmark in the streetscape of Albemarle, North Carolina, since its construction. It stands at 415 North Second Street in the Stanly County seat on a rectangular lot in the southwest corner of North Second and Franklin streets measuring 119 feet on its east and west borders and 182 feet on its north and south sides and comprising about one-half acre. The Denning House is located on the south side of Cannon Memorial Park in a neighborhood that was residential into the mid-twentieth century but has since evolved into one of a mixed residential, institutional, and commercial character. While the park on the north side of the house and the two-story early twentieth-century frame house at 407 North Second Street on the south (and Dr. Hall's Asbury-designed house immediately south at #343) have been its neighbors since 1924, Our Lady of the Annunciation Catholic Church on the opposite east side of North Second Street and the branch office of First Citizens Bank on the west side of the lot both claimed other houses and their grounds for their facilities and parking lots. Despite its name, Second Street is a principal artery in Albemarle and residential in character for about a block and a half south of the Denning House to the crossing of North Street which is dominated by the imposing First Baptist and Central Methodist churches and the Albemarle Hotel at 202, 172, and 197 North Second Street, respectively. The Albemarle City Hall is located at 144 North Second Street while the Stanly County Courthouse stands at 201 South Second Street in the second block below the junction with Main Street.

The half-acre grounds of the Denning House comprise an open, grass-covered lawn on which the house and the garage are positioned on an east/west axis in the near center of the lot. The lawn is partially shaded by a towering, aged oak tree at the front southeast edge of the lawn and the rows of oaks which line both sides of Franklin Street. Low brick walls with inset horizontal panels and concrete caps, positioned parallel with the concrete sidewalks, retain the lawn along both North Second and Franklin streets. Inset brick steps, flanked by piers, rise from the sidewalk to the original brick-paved walk leading to the front steps centered on the house's east façade. The porte cochere on the house's north side is served by a half-circle concrete-paved drive that enters the property from its northeast front corner and exits onto Franklin Street about midway of the lot. A separate concrete driveway links the two-vehicle garage with Franklin Street. Low brick piers with concrete caps, inset in the retaining wall, flank these three entrances. Plantings of evergreen shrubs enhance the half-circle drive and the garage drive which is also planted with *Yucca filamentosa* beside the piers. Foundation plantings of mixed evergreens, including *ligustrum* and hollies, together with azaleas and rhododendrons,

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sometimes underplanted with periwinkle and lirope, enhance the façade and north and south elevations. As with many such domestic grounds, the woody plant material includes original and later, supplemental plantings of sympathetic period character. Specimen shrub plantings, including a rose bush and a very large, probably original ligustrum off the northeast corner of the garage, also survive on the grounds.

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### Narrative Description

In his design of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style house for Mr. Denning, Louis Asbury dressed an essentially symmetrical two-story, double-pile house with custom-designed fenestration and extraordinary bracketed, tiled pent cornices. These cornices encircle the rectangular parapet-roof main block and the full-façade porch, also covered with a parapet roof, which terminates on the south with a side/sun porch and on the north with a porte cochere as well as the one-story block which occupies most of the house's west elevation. (The finish and appearance of the side porch on the south elevation was originally like that of the front porch; in about the late 1940s it was refitted and glazed as a sun porch. The deteriorated glazing was removed for repair and restoration during the current rehabilitation project.) The cornices, with deep molded, denticulated, and sheathed eaves supported by bold paired, molded, painted white brackets and covered with green roof tiles, complement the house's red wire-cut brick elevations. The brick are laid in common bond with tan mortar and with a water table of alternating trios of soldier and stretcher brick. The effect is an architectural richness that approaches flamboyance. In this situation, where conventional sash windows would have been too prosaic, Mr. Asbury fitted the window openings of the Denning House with its own imaginative sash treatment. The double-hung wood sash windows have a three-tier arrangement with the upper sash partitioned into two unequal parts, featuring a four-pane "transom" aligned above paired panes, with the lower sash containing a single large square pane. The fenestration features single, paired, and triple windows with header sills and soldier-course lintels.

The east façade of the Denning House has a balanced, essentially symmetrical design with the three-bay two-story main block flanked at the first story by the side/sun porch on the south and the porte cochere on the north. In the arrangement of these elements Mr. Asbury departed from a strict repetitive symmetry. The three bays of the main block are fronted by a spacious porch, supported by corresponding thick, square-in-plan brick piers linked by a blind brick balustrade with a painted concrete cap. The three bays of the porch are extended on the north with a fourth bay which incorporates the porte cochere. At the south end of the porch, the terra cotta tiled porch floor wraps around the southeast corner of the house as an open terrace and continues as the floor of the side/sun porch occupying the easternmost bay of the south elevation. The porch floor is drained by demi-lune openings in each of the bays fitted with keystones and painted white. In the design of the porch, Mr. Asbury continued the form of the brick piers above the pent cornices where they punctuate the horizontal parapet and give emphasis to the bay divisions. The center entrance on the

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first story is flanked by large openings holding triple sash windows. The design of the door, flanked by beveled, leaded glass sidelights and a transom, replicates the pattern and proportions of the fenestration. The lower half of the door is a single square molded blind panel while the upper half is glazed and fitted with four panes above two larger panes. The transom above the door is at a level corresponding with the four-pane "transoms" in each window. On the second story the bay above the entrance is fitted with paired eight-pane casement windows and flanked by three-part windows corresponding with the openings below. A low concrete-capped brick parapet, framed by piers at the corners, completes the elevation.

The south elevation of the Denning House is balanced on each level. On the first story, the side/sun porch occupies the east half of the elevation and protects multi-pane, paired doors opening into Mr. Denning's former office. The south half of the two bay elevation contains an opening fitted with paired sash windows that illuminates Mr. Denning's bedroom. The second story has a three-bay division with a double window in the east bay illuminating the southeast corner bedroom, a single window in the center bay that provided light and air to the original second-story bathroom, and a single window in the west bay that served Mrs. Denning's bedroom in the southwest corner of the second story. The recessed one-story block, which contained the single original first-story bathroom at its south end, has a single window in its south wall.

On the Denning House's west elevation, the one-story block, which contains (north to south) the kitchen, a glazed porch, and the first-story bathroom, occupies all of the first-story elevation except for a narrow width at the extreme south edge where a single window is located. The kitchen and glazed porch portions of the block project forward of the bathroom, which is offset and recessed in plan. The porch, which was originally fitted with wood lattice panels with square openings, was glazed by Mr. Denning in a manner which replicates the original fenestration but with the addition of a transom above the double-hung sash windows on the west and south sides that also replicates the two-tier design of the upper sash. A glazed door of similar design in the south wall, which replaces the earlier wood lattice door, opens onto brick steps. This refitting and glazing was probably contemporary with the enclosure of the south side porch as a sun porch in about the late 1940s. The north end of the block, which houses the kitchen, has a three-part arrangement with single window openings flanking a centered interior-end chimney that served both the kitchen cook stove and the basement furnace. The opening on the south side of the chimney is blind. At ground level steps descend in a concrete well, positioned parallel with the wall, to a basement door.

The north elevation of the Denning House, overlooking Cannon Memorial Park, has a general three-part division, reflecting the interior positioning of the living room, dining room, and kitchen in a tier, east to west, that incorporates the porte cochere at its east end, where the driveway carries under the shelter. Steps inset in the north end of the porch rise under the porte cochere to the porch floor. The east part of the house's elevation, comprising single windows flanking an interior-end chimney, is

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slightly recessed to allow ease in the arc of the driveway. The center part of the elevation, which projects slightly forward of the flanking parts, contains a large window opening fitted with three sash windows illuminating the dining room. The west, one-story part of the elevation has a single and paired windows, shorter in height, that provided light to the kitchen. At the basement level, aligned under the water table, are paired windows under the dining room and larger kitchen windows and a metal cover for the coal chute. At the second story level, paired single windows illuminate the northeast corner bedroom above the living room, while a second pair of single windows illuminates the northwest corner bedroom positioned above the dining room.

The interior plan and finish of the Thomas Marcellus Denning House reflect a remarkable degree of consistency and integrity. The first-story floor plan and arrangement of rooms remain entirely original except in the rear one-story block where some minor repartitioning has occurred in the passage linking the stair hall and the glazed porch to provide a lavatory/utility room and the walls between the kitchen and the breakfast room and glazed porch have been removed to create a larger kitchen. Both of these changes have occurred in the current project, and reflect the new owners' intentions to do their own food preparation and laundry whereas, before, servants handled those chores for the Denning family.

Louis Humbert Asbury crafted a well-detailed Colonial Revival-style interior for the Dennings whose flooring, plaster wall and ceiling finishes, mantels, molded door and window surrounds, baseboards, and other architectural woodwork, doors and their hardware are consistent throughout the house. The quarter-sawn oak flooring used throughout the house, except in the bathrooms, was milled by the W. M. Ritter Lumber Company and lengths of the flooring lifted during the current rehabilitation are inscribed "W. M. RITTER LBR. CO." on their underside. The plaster finish is smooth and either painted or covered at points in the Denning occupancy with wallpaper. The baseboards are well-proportioned to the ceiling height and have a plain board base with an applied top molding. The door and window surrounds have a general classic three-part design. The larger doorways linking the reception rooms and stair hall on the first story are fitted with glazed multi-pane French doors. The other doorways and those on the second story are fitted with dark-stained single-panel doors. Virtually all of the interior doors retain their original hardware and molded glass knobs. The glass chandeliers in the living and dining rooms and the chandelier in the library date to the Denning occupancy as do some of the paired wall sconces throughout the house; others have been added to replace later, unsympathetic fixtures or those lost through time. The only diminution in finish occurs in the matter of the cornice finish that is more developed in the reception rooms.

The front door opens directly into the living room located in the house's northeast corner and its largest room. The fireplace with a classically molded post-and-lintel Colonial Revival-style mantel is centered on a projecting chimney breast in the north wall and fitted with a metal coal grate and cover and an ivory glazed tile surround and hearth. On the

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opposite south wall paired, dark-stained ten-pane French doors open into a parlor that became Mr. Denning's office. A second set of such doors are set in the west wall and open into the dining room. A single fifteen-pane door, slightly off axis with the front door, opens into the stair hall. An L-shaped, half-wall height glazed bookcase is built into the room's southeast corner. During the current rehabilitation, the ghost marks for the original molded chair rail and moldings applied to the walls to simulate paneling were discovered. They had been removed by the Dennings in about 1949 when highly decorative wallpapers were added. The Scarboros have reinstalled these features, which replicate those designed in 1923 by Mr. Asbury that remain intact in the Jasper Efird House in Albemarle.

The parlor/Mr. Denning's office enjoys a discernable symmetry with paired doors on axis with those from the living room opening from the parlor onto the side/sun porch. The mantel centered in the room's west wall is essentially the same as the living room mantel and also fitted with a covered coal grate and aquamarine glazed tile surround and hearth.

A door on the south side of the fireplace connects with Mr. Denning's bedroom in the southwest corner of the main block. It is fitted with a mantel, coal grate, and tilework identical to that in the living room. It is *ensuite* with a bathroom to the west that retains its original tub and blue-and-white hexagonal glazed tile floor. The original tile wainscot was greatly damaged in about the 1980s, replaced then with inexpensive materials, but it has now been renewed in-kind with white tiling. A small glazed wall-hung cabinet, installed originally in the kitchen, was relocated here on the room's west wall above the commode.

The stair hall, in the rear center of the house, has doors opening into the living and dining rooms, Mr. Denning's bedroom, and the service passage on its west side. The staircase, rising to the west along the north wall, has a dark-stained handrail rising from a molded square-in-plan newel with a molded square cap and carried on square balusters. It rises to an inter-story landing and continues to the second story.

The original interior decoration of the dining room also featured applied moldings on the walls to simulate vertical panels. These, too, were removed by the Dennings in about 1949, when richly floral wallpaper was installed. They have been recreated, again using models in the Asbury-designed Efird House of 1923. Small panels of the floral wallpaper have been preserved within those moldings above the doors to the stair hall and kitchen. A door in the room's west wall opens into the kitchen whose finish and glazed cherry cabinetry date to the current rehabilitation except for the original door and window surrounds. Carolina Custom Cabinets of Albemarle manufactured and installed the new cabinetry. A shoulder-high rail, discovered during the project, is being reinstalled in the kitchen. The flooring is tile and the walls and ceiling are painted plaster. The finishes and fittings in the utility room/lavatory in the passage are also of current date.

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The original second-story plan of the Denning House featured four bedrooms of unequal size in each of the house's four corners opening off the spacious landing. A single bathroom was centered on the south side of the house, between the southeast and southwest bedrooms, and a trio of closets partitioned in a like rectangular space in the front center of the house between the southeast and northeast bedrooms. The original floor plan and the architectural finish of the second story including the mantels with coal grates and tilework in the two east/front bedrooms remain intact. The bedrooms remain as bedrooms except for the southwest room, the smallest of the four, which has been fitted in the rehabilitation as a bathroom with new finish and fixtures. The original bathroom, heavily damaged in about the 1980s, has been refitted in 2010 and made *ensuite* with the southeast bedroom. The front closet opening off the northeast bedroom and a portion of the adjoining closet which opens into the landing have been refitted as a bathroom *ensuite* with the northeast bedroom. In the later twentieth century while the house was a rental property, a closet opening off the north side of the landing was refitted as a half-bathroom. Those low-cost fittings have been removed and the space restored to its original function as a closet.

The partial basement of the Denning House is accessible from the exterior entrance and an interior stair which descends to the east under the rise of the main stair. The stair has painted treads and a molded handrail with a simple railing of square balusters and a turned newel with a spherical finial. The area under the stair is enclosed for storage and has open wood lattice on its south side. The basement has a poured concrete floor, painted brick or cast concrete walls, and features of both its original finish and adaptations for later usage. One five-, horizontal-panel door remains in place as does the glazed-and-paneled exterior door opening onto the stairwell.

The Garage  
1924-25; by 1929  
Contributing building

The garage is a rectangular brick masonry building which dates to two periods of construction, and whose present roofless condition reflects a long period of neglect in the 1980s and 1990s when water damaged the roof structure leading to deterioration and the dismantling of remaining decayed fabric in recent years by the present owner. The parapet walls remain intact but the top courses of brickwork have suffered water damage. The original garage, designed by Mr. Asbury, comprised a single garage space for one vehicle, whose opening is in the center of the building's north elevation, and the tier of two small storage/work rooms occupying its east side with door openings on their east walls and window openings on their respective exterior north and south walls. The paired four-vertical-over-one sash windows in the north wall remain in place and parts of those in the two window openings in the south wall of the original building also remain. The clear, single pane transoms in the door openings remain in place, however, the original doors are removed (but extant). The original,

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now deteriorated three-fold glazed-and-paneled doors for the garage remain in place. Soon after construction, Mr. Denning added a second garage space on the west side of the original building and a large conservatory-like room across the south side of the expanded building, slightly recessed inside its east and west walls, which has two large window openings in its south elevation and a third such window in its west elevation. The sash in the south-facing openings are lost, however, most of the four-vertical-over-one sash in the west windows survive. The garage's original pent cornice was continued on the north elevation above the added garage stall which was also fitted with three-fold doors that are essentially like the original doors. The pent cornice was lost to deterioration. Through time, the large added room, and the smaller, original rooms have served a variety of uses. For a long, undefined period of time, the large room served as the quarters of Miss Sallie J. Tyson (1892-1963), the Dennings's cook/housekeeper. (Note: the garage will be restored during the current project.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1924 with its design and construction and continues to 1960 when Mr. Denning retired as general superintendent of Wiscassett Mills Company.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Industry

**Period of Significance**

1924-1960

**Significant Dates**

1924

1960

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Denning, Thomas Marcellus

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Asbury, Louis Humbert, Sr. -- architect

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Thomas Marcellus Denning House, standing at 415 North Second Street in Albemarle, the county seat of Stanly County, North Carolina, occupies an important place in the twentieth-century history of Albemarle, holds local significance in the area of architecture, and enjoys important associations with its builder, Mr. Denning, whose sixty-year career with Wiscassett Mills is unexampled in the city where it was the largest employer for most of the century. The well-preserved Spanish Colonial Revival-style brick house was designed by Charlotte architect Louis Humbert Asbury Sr. in 1924 for Thomas Marcellus Denning, who resided here with his family through his retirement in 1960 until his death in 1962. The Denning House, which remained in family ownership until 2006, meets National Register Criteria B and C.

Thomas Marcellus Denning (1870-1962), described in his *Stanly News And Press* obituary on 27 March 1962 as "Albemarle's 'grand old man of the textile industry,'" stood at the center of the textile industry in Albemarle for a remarkable sixty years, from 12 March 1900 when he arrived in town to assume the superintendency of Wiscassett Mills, until retiring in March 1960. His career in textiles began at the age of ten in 1880 when the family moved from his native Rockingham County to Alamance County where he worked in the Carolina Cotton Mill. The Denning family moved on to mills at Swepsonville and Ossipee before continuing on to Durham Cotton Mills about 1884 where Mr. Denning rose through the ranks to a managerial position he held until relocating to Albemarle. Here at Wiscassett Mills, whose presidency was held by members of the Cannon family from its founding in 1898 to Charles Albert Cannon's retirement in 1962, Mr. Denning worked alongside the company's secretary-treasurer in the management of the company and its expanding facilities. In an editorial tribute following his death, the *Stanly News And Press* described him as having "represented an era in industrial growth which is now passing from the scene" having "headed the operation at Wiscassett at a time when there was a high premium on quality, and he is given credit for the high quality reputation built up for Wiscassett yarn."

From the time of its construction in 1924, and completion either late that year or in early 1925, the Thomas Marcellus Denning House has been an appealing, colorful landmark in the architectural townscape of Albemarle. Being the second of two residences designed by Louis Humbert Asbury Sr. (1877-1975) for Mr. Denning, standing a few hundred feet southwest of the earlier, now lost Colonial Revival-style frame house, this Spanish Colonial Revival-style brick house is distinguished by bold pent cornices supported by paired brackets and covered with green tiles which impart a highly individual character to the house, its porch, side/sun porch, and porte cochere. The Denning House's symmetrical elevations are further enhanced by custom-designed double-hung sash windows featuring a two-tier upper sash of four-over-two panes above a single square lower sash. In effect the upper tiers of four vertically-aligned panes have the appearance of

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transoms, and this pattern of fenestration provides ample natural light to the Colonial Revival-style interior. A contemporary garage of like character stands behind the house.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

In 1900, when Thomas Marcellus Denning (1870-1962) arrived in Albemarle to work as superintendent of the newly-established Wiscassett Mills, he brought long experience and a surprisingly mature perspective to his post. The Wiscassett Mills Company, incorporated in 1898 and placed in operation as a textile plant in 1899, was second only in Albemarle to the Efird Manufacturing Company established in 1896. These pioneering concerns in the industrialization of the Stanly County seat both reflected major investments by James William Cannon (1852-1921), the legendary North Carolina textile entrepreneur based in Concord, the seat of adjoining Cabarrus County. From 1900 until his retirement at the age of ninety in 1960, Mr. Denning was an important face of Wiscassett Mills in Albemarle, and he was heralded at his death two years later as "Albemarle's 'grand old man of the textile industry.'"<sup>1</sup> For most if not all of his period of employment, and until his death, he was addressed by the honorific "Captain."

Thomas Marcellus Denning junior was born in Rockingham County, North Carolina, on 4 February 1870 to Thomas Marcellus Denning (b. ca. 1836) and his wife Mary Ann Vanhoy (b. ca. 1840).<sup>2</sup> The known details of his life from birth to his relocation to Albemarle are few and chiefly those contained in "a brief autobiography, prepared by Cap'n Denning himself," which was published in the *Stanly News And Press* on 11 March 1960.

I was born on a farm near Wentworth, N.C., county seat of Rockingham County, February 4, 1870. Later our family of nine moved to Carolina Cotton Mill housed in a wooden building on the river a short distance from the town of Haw River. The mill was owned and operated by the Holt family and produced a cheap, colored plaid cloth. Several members of our family worked there. I was 10 years old when given employment in 1880 as a sweeper and oiler, a job requiring 12 hours daily, six days a week, at 10¢ a day.

In connection with my job, I fired four big cast iron wood stoves, country store style. The mill building was a two-story structure with two stoves used on each floor for heating. Shortly thereafter we moved to Swepsonville, a town also a short distance from Haw River, N.C. It was not long before this mill burned to the ground. This was before automatic sprinklers and fire protection were used at the mills in our section.

After the fire and seeking future employment, our family moved to Ossipee, a new building site in the country on the river, where

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the Ossipee Cotton Mill was being built by James M. Williamson and Sons. My father had charge of the construction work on the mill building and on the houses being erected for the company's employees. The mill is now being operated by Burlington Industries and is located a few miles from Burlington, N.C. I was 12 years old and working in the brick yards 12 hours a day for 10¢ a day. I helped make the brick that went into the new building. In those days we used hand molds, making four bricks at a time.

The mill was completed and machinery installed about the time James A. Garfield, President of the United States, was assassinated. The original operation was started up with 12 spinning frames with a total of 2,400 spindles. I was assigned the job of looking after the big kerosene lamps, country store style with holders, suspended from the ceiling. My daily routine was to re-fuel the lamps, wash the globes and trim the wicks.

About 1884 our family moved to Durham, N.C., where I began working in the Durham Cotton Mills, another new mill which was just starting operations. I was given the job of making bands for spinning frames at 25¢ a day. Soon things turned out well for me - I was moved up. In a short time I was promoted to Section Man, to Second Hand, and finally to Overseer of Spinning. I was 19 years old when promoted. I held this job for 11 years. At the end of this period I was offered and accepted the Superintendency of Wiscassett Mills in March 1900.

Wiscassett had a small beginning with 200 employees, first and second shifts; 34 cards and 12,000 spindles on carded work. I cannot recall a single mill in the South operating combers this early. Promoter and President of Wiscassett was Mr. J. W. Cannon, a grand person, pioneer in the textile field, a man of keen foresight and considered a man of important executive ability. Early in 1900 Mr. Joe Cannon was named Secretary and Treasurer and under their able direction the plant grew into an important position in the textile industry.<sup>3</sup>

The circumstances by which Mr. Denning came to the notice of the management of the Cannon Manufacturing Company in Concord are unknown. In the account of his career published in the *Stanly News And Press* on 14 March 1950, obviously based on Mr. Denning's recount, he remembered that "In February, 1900, C. C. Barnhardt, then general superintendent of Cannon Manufacturing company offered . . . (him) the position of superintendent of Wiscassett Mills company." Mr. Denning began work on 12 March 1900.

The plant then consisted of one unit, a small office manned by Mr. Denning and "Shack" Ritchie, and the main office which was located on the present site of Lowder Hardware company. J. C. Leslie, secretary and treasurer, was the top man in this office.

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It was shortly after this that an expansion program was undertaken and three more units were built and placed in operation. The development of a count rate of 20s and 30s carded yarn to 60s and 140s in both the combed and carded fields gave Wiscassett a versatility which can be found in very few mills.<sup>4</sup>

When Mr. Denning assumed this position as superintendent of Wiscassett Mills, his was one of the two principal Albemarle-based administrative positions in the company, each of which complemented the other. From the organization of Wiscassett Mills in 1898 until his death in December 1921, James William Cannon (1852-1921), the principal stockholder, and a resident of Concord, North Carolina, held the presidency of the firm. His letterhead identified him as president of thirteen textile manufacturing companies, including manufacturing plants in Concord, Kannapolis, Mt. Pleasant, China Grove, Salisbury, and Thomasville, North Carolina, together with the Efird Manufacturing and Wiscassett Mills companies in Albemarle, and the Imperial Cotton Mills in Eatonton, Georgia. He was succeeded later as president by his youngest son Charles Albert Cannon (1892-1971), who consolidated eight of the Cannon-dominated textile mills into the Cannon Mills Company in 1928. For now unknown reasons, the Efird and Wiscassett companies remained outside the consolidation for their entire history of operation. While the majority interest in the Efird Manufacturing Company would be sold in 1947 to the American Yarn Processing Company and merged in 1952 as American and Efird Mills, the Wiscassett Mills Company remained under Charles Albert Cannon's direction until his retirement in 1962--the year of Mr. Denning's death. For almost his entire period of employment with Wiscassett Mills, from 1900 to 1960, Mr. Denning, answered to but two presidents of the company.<sup>5</sup> In the hierarchy of plant operations here, as elsewhere in the Cannon textile empire, the secretary-treasurer of Wiscassett Mills Company, was the local, on-site financial officer. John C. Leslie was the secretary-treasurer of Wiscassett Mills when Mr. Denning joined the office. Mr. Leslie left Albemarle in about 1903 to take charge of a New York City sales office for Cannon textiles and he was succeeded as secretary-treasurer for a brief period by Joseph Franklin Cannon, the eldest son of the company president. James Alonzo Groves (1873-1955) assumed the office of secretary-treasurer in about 1903 and held the position until retiring in 1945.

As superintendent of Wiscassett Mills, Mr. Denning oversaw production at the plant and its constituent mills and the work of its offices, warehousing and related physical facilities. The construction, management, and maintenance of mill housing was one of his chief responsibilities, one that he recalled for the newspaper reporter in 1950 when the Wiscassett worker housing comprised "364 modern dwellings situated in the northwestern section of Albemarle. Through the use of trees, shrubbery, and landscaping, the village is rapidly becoming one of the prettiest sections of the city." In 1900, when Mr. Denning came to Wiscassett Mills, the population of Albemarle was about 1,800. Within five years, by 1905, the population would swell to about 3,000. Much of this increase was housed in

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company-owned housing that had been announced at the time of the company's organization in 1898.<sup>6</sup>

Overseeing the construction of the first of two mill villages erected for mill operatives occupied his first years of employment, simultaneous with the expansion of the manufacturing complex. The Wiscassett Mills housing occupied acreage generally north of the plant and a village common, now known as Cannon Memorial Park, where the Wiscassett School and other village institutions, including First Street Methodist Church, were located. Housing for management and supervisors, including two houses built for and occupied by Mr. Denning and his family, encircled the village common.<sup>7</sup>

The Wiscassett Mills Company was highly successful from its start, and its profitability prompted further expansion in the 1910s. This effort took the form of enlarged production and processing facilities at the main site, flanked by the rail lines of the former Yadkin/Carolina and Northwestern Railroad and the Winston-Salem Southbound, and at a new, nearby plant for hosiery production located several blocks to the east, on Montgomery Avenue, between North Third and North Fourth streets, that was served by a spur of the Carolina and Northwest Railroad. Housing for the hosiery mill division is said to have been constructed by a hired contractor, D. A. Holbrook. It comprised a village occupying the blocks adjoining the new mill. These expansions, largely completed in 1918, sparked an economic boom in Albemarle that continued through the 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

While the Wiscassett Mills were Albemarle's second oldest textile manufacturing company by date of operation, the concern quickly became and remained the largest industrial concern in the county seat and its largest employer in the period leading up to World War II and afterward. The status of the company is reflected in articles and listings in the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the *Stanly News And Press*, Section 6, "Industry in Albemarle and Stanly County," published on 16 August 1940. In the listing of "Industrial Plants in Stanly County," Wiscassett Mills Company (cotton yarn) is first, followed by the Knitting Department of Wiscassett Mills Company (hosiery division). The Efird Manufacturing Company, producers of cotton yarn, was listed in third position while the Lillian Knitting Mills Company, which also produced hosiery, was given fourth place. These positions have their parallel in the roster of "Stanly's Industrial Leaders," described as ". . . men who hold key positions in the industrial establishments in Stanly county, to whom we give recognition today for the part they have played and are playing in the development of Albemarle and Stanly County." James Alonzo Groves, secretary-treasurer of Wiscassett Mills, who was also a principal owner of Stanly County's Oakboro Cotton Mills and a benefactor of Morrow Mountain State Park, was at the head of the list. Thomas Marcellus Denning, then general superintendent of Wiscassett Mills, occupied second place on the roster, and he was followed by his son Wade Fulton Denning (1895-1993), who had succeeded his father as superintendent of Wiscassett Mills. The Wiscassett Mills officers were followed in the listing by those of the Efird Manufacturing Company,

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including Arthur Knox Winget, and the Lillian Knitting Mills Company, respectively, and those of other concerns in Albemarle and Stanly County including the Carolina Aluminum Company at Badin. The Lillian Mills executives, Hubert Clinton Patterson (1887-1959) and Arthur Low Patterson (1877-1972), were the sons of Ibsen Franklin Patterson (1842-1896), who was a partner with James William Cannon in the organization of Patterson Manufacturing Company at China Grove, North Carolina, in 1893. In 1940, when Albemarle had a population of 5,625 and Stanly County had a population of 32,834, the Wiscassett Mills employed 1,700 persons while the Efird Manufacturing Company had 900 employees.

When Mr. Denning came to Albemarle in 1900 he was married and the father of two children. In about 1894 he married Bettie Wilson Strickland (1872-1967), the daughter of Andrew and Cemanthia (Todd) Strickland and a native of Wake County, North Carolina. Wade Fulton Denning was born in 1895, and the family increased in 1898 with the birth of Erdene Beatrice Denning (1898-1987). Mr. Denning apparently first came alone and boarded for a period at the home of John W. and Ida M. Bostian which stood in the northwest corner of North Second and North streets, within easy walking distance of Wiscassett Mills.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, and until about 1916, Mr. Denning and his family, increased by the birth of three more children, Mabel Heitman Denning (1901-1989), Ralph Erwin Denning (190\_-1994), and Elbert Hubbard Denning (1909-1998), resided in company owned housing.

The expansion of Wiscassett Mills facilities in the 1910s also produced new housing for officers of the company including a handsome Colonial Revival-style residence for Mr. Denning. In the event that house was the first of two that Louis Humbert Asbury Sr., the Charlotte-based architect, designed for Mr. Denning. In fall 1915 Mr. Denning commissioned the new house which would be built on a company-owned lot at company expense. The 1.42-acre parcel, conveyed to the Wiscassett Mills Company by James William Cannon, his wife, and others on 10 November 1915, lay on the east side of the 500 block of North Second Street at the head of the mill village common that became Cannon Memorial Park.<sup>10</sup> Construction on the house was probably begun about that time and completed in the first half of 1916. The Denning family's new weatherboarded frame house comprised a two-story hip-roof main block with an expansive one-story porch that wrapped the corners of its three-bay west façade and carried east on the side elevations to abut shallow two-story gable-front ells. The porch, typical of its era, featured Tuscan columns on brick plinths linked by a turned railing that also incorporated a porte cochere on the south elevation. A low granite masonry wall, with piers framing the inset driveway entrance and steps down to the sidewalk, retained the front lawn along North Second Street. The house at 506 North Second Street was home to the Denning family for some nine years.<sup>11</sup>

In about 1923 Thomas Marcellus Denning decided to build a new residence for his family and acquired a choice lot for the house from Wiscassett Mills. He selected a rectangular lot on the south edge of the mill village common, in the southwest corner of North Second and Franklin streets and about a

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half-block south of his company-owned dwelling. He turned again to Mr. Asbury for the design of this new house, a brick residence of Spanish Colonial character with brick elevations and green tile roofing. This project, dated 3 July 1924, is job number 577.<sup>12</sup> This new house, two stories in height and with a three-bay east façade, had a full façade porch which engaged the one-story sun porch on its south side and a porte cochere of similar dimensions on the north side with a half-circle drive entering and exiting onto Franklin Street. A garage of like design, with its own driveway off Franklin Street, was erected to the rear of the house, at the west edge of the lot.

Mr. Denning and his wife resided at 415 North Second Street from the house's completion, either in late 1924 or early 1925, through his retirement in 1960, until his death on 22 March 1962. In 1947 Mr. Denning again secured the services of Mr. Asbury for the design of a two-story educational building, known as the Denning Memorial, which was completed in 1948 on the north side of the First Street Methodist Church located at 509 North First Street. In 1953 Louis Asbury returned to the church and prepared drawings for a remodeling of the congregation's 1914 Gothic Revival-style sanctuary.<sup>13</sup> It was between these two church projects, in about the late 1940s, that Mrs. Denning suffered two falls, broke both of her hips, and found she could no longer easily climb the stairs to her second-story bedroom. Mr. Denning created a first-story bedroom for her by refitting and glazing the south side porch as a sun porch and curtaining its windows. Whether Mr. Asbury consulted on this work is unknown. Meanwhile, Mr. Denning's fiftieth anniversary with Wiscasset Mills was honored by a front-page article in the *Stanly News And Press* on 14 March 1950. Ten years later, on 11 March 1960, the newspaper carried a second tribute celebrating his service of sixty years with Wiscasset Mills.

Mr. Denning's health failed in late 1960 and "Albemarle's 'grand old man of the textile industry'" died on Thursday, 22 March 1962. He was buried from First Street Methodist Church on Saturday, 24 March, and interred in the family plot in Albemarle's Fairview Cemetery on East Main Street. His front-page obituary in the *Stanly News And Press* on 27 March 1962, was accompanied by an editorial under the caption "Cap'n Denning."

The passing of Cap'n Thomas M. Denning on Thursday night removed from Albemarle one of its best known and best loved men. He represented an era in industrial growth which is now passing from the scene.

A most remarkable man, Mr. Denning was general superintendent of Wiscasset Mills Company until his retirement in 1960 - a period of 60 years.

Someone said Friday that Cap'n Denning was still, even at the time of his retirement, one of the ablest men in the textile industry. They said he could walk through a plant, up and down

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the aisles, and detect a defective or worn machine, and immediately diagnose the trouble.

Mr. Denning headed the operation at Wiscassett at a time when there was a high premium on quality, and he is given credit for the high quality reputation built up for Wiscassett yarn.

Until his last months of declining health made it impossible, Mr. Denning maintained the keen interest in textile operations and in the community around him which characterized all his life.

Mrs. Denning remained in the family house until relocating to the Methodist Home in Charlotte in about 1966. She died in Charlotte on 25 March 1967 and was interred beside her husband in Fairview Cemetery. Mabel Denning York (1901-1989), the Denning's middle child, resided here with her mother in the mid-1960s and she, too, remained here for some time after her mother's death. Under the terms of Mr. Denning's will, the house passed into the ownership of his youngest son, Dr. Ralph Erwin Denning, (190\_-1994), of Montclair, California. In 1994 he and his wife Carmel B. Denning conveyed the house and lot to the Denning Family Trust, of which they were trustees. On 9 October 2006, Mrs. Carmel B. Denning, a widow and the surviving trustee, sold the Thomas Marcellus Denning House to David E. and Brenda P. Scarboro.<sup>14</sup> During Dr. Denning's ownership and that of the family trust, the house was rented for residential use. Furniture which had remained in the house was stored in the garage and lost to water damage when the garage roof deteriorated and partially collapsed. Mr. and Mrs. Scarboro are restoring the house as their residence.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

Architectural Significance

The architectural significance of the Thomas Marcellus Denning House reflects its status as an important, well-preserved example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style of bold individuality in Albemarle, as one of a small number of intact surviving residences erected for executives of the local textile industry, and as one of a group of imposing houses erected in the Stanly County seat in the boom years from the late 1910s, through the 1920s, and into the early 1930s. The plans for the Denning House, the second of two houses designed for Mr. Denning by the Charlotte architect Louis Humbert Asbury Sr. (1877-1975) were dated 3 July 1924. They are not known to survive, however, their date and the commission number, #577, are recorded in Mr. Asbury's surviving office job book.<sup>15</sup> The house and its contemporary garage are believed to have been completed either in late 1924 or early 1925 at 415 North Second Street where it joined two earlier Asbury-designed houses for Mr. Denning and Dr. Julius Clegg Hall (1874-1929), at 506 and 343 North Second Street, respectively.<sup>16</sup> The Thomas Marcellus Denning House remained his residence until death in 1962, that of

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his widow Bettie Strickland Denning, who died in 1967, and his younger daughter Mabel Heitman Denning York (1901-1989) for a time, and the (rental) property of his youngest son Dr. Ralph Erwin Denning (19\_\_-1994) and his widow until 2006 when it was acquired by the present owners, David E. and Brenda P. Scarboro. The Scarboros are restoring the house as their residence.

Having commissioned a Colonial Revival-style frame house from Mr. Asbury in 1915, an imposing house built by Wiscassett Mills on company land as his executive residence, Mr. Denning departed from convention when he undertook his own private residence. In North Carolina the Spanish Colonial Revival style and its companion, the Spanish Mission style, appeared infrequently and only then in a short period principally from the later 1910s into the early 1930s. Houses in the style usually reflected the particular architectural or artistic interests of the builder, while some few commercial or institutional buildings reflected their function or other associations. The North Carolina State Fair Exhibition Building in Raleigh, Wake County, designed by Atwood and Weeks and completed in 1928, is arguably the best known example of the style in North Carolina. Its stucco elevations incorporating tower pavilions, red tile roofs and pents, and terra cotta detailing, were hallmarks of the style, which saw expression in a free, often eclectic adoption of building forms and materials associated with the American Southwest or centers of Spanish influence in California, Texas, and Florida. Features of Spanish missions and haciendas were incorporated into new buildings, along with favored decorative elements. The Salisbury Southern Railway Station of 1908 in Rowan County, with a dominant tower, gabled pavilions, arcaded walkways, and tiled roof and awnings designed by Frank P. Milburn, is possibly the earliest example of the style in North Carolina. Houses in the Spanish Colonial Revival or Spanish Mission styles were artful dwellings and showed great variety. El Nido, a stucco house with a red tile roof and pents carried on bold, paired brackets, completed about 1921 in Shelby, Cleveland County, is the most elaborate, accomplished example of the style in North Carolina. Other examples range from The Frith, a house of 1925 designed by Bruce Kitchell of Palm Beach for George Vanderbilt's widow and built on a part of the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, Buncombe County, to the tile-roofed stuccoed elevations of the Franklin Fletcher Smith house of ca. 1912 in Salisbury, also attributed to Mr. Milburn.

The design of the Thomas Marcellus Denning House is a free exercise incorporating red brick and green roof tiles in a symmetrical composition comprising a two-story main block and a full façade east-facing one-story porch that engages a side/sun porch on its south side and a porte cochere on the north. The Spanish Colonial Revival styling is principally embodied in the extraordinary pent cornices, with deep eaves, molded brackets, and tile roofing, which carry around the parapet elevations of the main block, the porch, side/sun porch, and porte cochere, and the elevations of the contemporary garage. Whether Mr. Asbury or Mr. Denning had seen El Nido is unknown, however, its over-scaled bracketed pent roofs are the closest known stylistic antecedent for those which adorn the Denning House and its

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garage. There is no known similar Spanish Colonial Revival-style house among the large body of residential architecture designed by Louis Asbury.<sup>17</sup> The interior decoration of the Denning House is in the Colonial Revival style and finished with the expected molded door and window surrounds, mantels, and other classically-detailed woodwork of architect-designed houses of the era.<sup>18</sup> The use of applied moldings to simulate paneling, originally installed in the Denning House, taken down in a ca. 1949 remodeling, and re-installed in the present project, was a practice seen in the finest Colonial and Georgian Revival-style houses of the 1920s and 1930s.

When completed and occupied by the Denning family, the Denning House joined a small group of imposing houses built for and occupied by the owners, executives, and upper-level managers of Albemarle's textile mills. Its architect, Mr. Asbury, whose practice in Albemarle spanned the period from 1911 to 1953, was a part of their history from an early date. The largest, and arguably most impressive of these houses was the grand Southern Colonial-style house built by John Solomon Efird (1857-1927) on West Main Street in an enclave of family residences. Mr. Efird was then an executive of the Efird Manufacturing Company. It remains to be confirmed whether the house, pulled down in about 1968, is the residence Mr. Asbury designed for Mr. Efird in June 1911 (commission #77) or in June 1914 (commission #172).<sup>19</sup> Neither set of drawings survive. In 1912, between those commissions Mr. Asbury designed a school building (commission #109) for the Efird and Wiscassett mills which is also lost. Mr. Denning's 1915 residence followed thereafter, among other Albemarle and Stanly County commissions. Documentary photographs record the imposing appearance of the Colonial Revival-style house, which was demolished and its grounds paved as a parking lot for the Catholic church. In 1923, the year after he designed the four-story Colonial Revival-style Albemarle Hotel (197 N. Second St.) for Dr. W. C. Fitzgerald, Louis Asbury designed two houses for members of the Efird family that were built on West Main Street. The drawings for the two-story granite house (705 W. Main St.) designed for Jasper Efird, a son of John Solomon Efird, were produced in July 1923, while those for Estelle Efird Morrow and her husband William H. Morrow were drawn in August 1923. The commissions, #s 535 and 536, respectively, produced houses of an identifiable 1920s character, with symmetrical facades, hip roofs, expansive wraparound porches and Colonial Revival styling. The green tile roof of the stucco-covered Morrow House (728 W. Main St.) appears as a precedent for the tile roofing of Mr. Denning's new house.

Other important houses for members of the textile elite of Albemarle were designed by as yet unconfirmed architects. The most accomplished of these is the residence of Frank Neville Patterson Sr. (1880-1949), general superintendent of the family owned Lillian Knitting Mills, which stands at 206 East North Street and is said to date to about 1918. With stuccoed elevations and a bracketed tile roof and tile pent roofs encircling its front and sun porches, the house has a Mediterranean character, as much Italian as Spanish. Whatever term is used to define it, the Patterson House is the closest in character in Albemarle to the Denning House.<sup>20</sup> The

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large, shingle-clad Craftsman-style bungalow of Charles Winfred Gaddy (1880-1941), the general superintendent of the knitting department of Wiscassett Mills, standing at 222 West North Street, is one of a series of houses built for Wiscassett Mills executives during the expansion of the 1910s.<sup>21</sup> The Colonial Revival style was yet another option for executive housing. Arthur Knox Winget (1882-1971), the president of Efird Manufacturing Company, adopted it for his new 1930s-era brick house on Pee Dee Avenue, which has one-story glazed wings flanked the symmetrical five-bay main block.<sup>22</sup>

The Thomas Marcellus Denning House, the grand, now lost residence of John Solomon Efird, the Frank Neville Patterson House, those noted above, and yet others comprise important examples of the impressive residential upbuilding of Albemarle in the decades of the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s fueled by the financial success and expansion of Albemarle's Efird, Wiscassett, and Lillian textile mills and the city's smaller industrial and commercial concerns. Mr. Denning's two houses and others associated with Wiscassett Mills stood in the blocks flanking the mills and operatives' housing. North Second Street was a desirable residential avenue for town residents including Dr. Hall and Dr. James Franklin Laton (1876-1964) for whom Mr. Asbury also designed a (as yet unlocated) house (commission #215) in 1916. So, too, was North Street, where Messrs. Gaddy and Patterson lived, which crossed North Second Street, linked the city's numerically-named streets, and was part of the larger residential neighborhood in north Albemarle. John Solomon Efird, members of the Efird family, and others, built and resided in a suburban enclave on West Main Street. Others, including Clyde Alexander Skidmore (1896-1963) built on the elevated acreage of East Main Street, east of the Lillian Knitting Mills, which anchored Main Street's intersection with Albemarle's Pee Dee Avenue. Louis Asbury designed an appealing eclectic cottage (commission #414) for Mr. Skidmore in 1921 which anticipates a large group of period cottages of the 1920s and 1930s that hold an important place in the residential architectural fabric of Albemarle. At the same time, in the opening decades of the twentieth century, a linear neighborhood of important houses developed along Pee Dee Avenue, alongside earlier turn-of-the-twentieth-century houses.<sup>23</sup> Here, on a street lined with Colonial Revival-style houses, including Mr. Winget's, period cottages, and other houses of varying character, Mr. Denning's eldest son, Wade Fulton Denning, opted to build in about 1946. And yet another, smaller enclave of important houses stands in south Albemarle, just beyond the county court house, where Thomas C. Hearne's elegant ca. 1909 Colonial Revival-style house stands on West South Street and Francis Eugene Starnes (1874-1932), a jeweler, built an imposing eclectic brick house with a red tile roof in about 1928 that, like the Denning House, is definably of the 1920s.<sup>24</sup>

Within this distinguished corpus of residential architecture in the Piedmont North Carolina county seat, the Thomas Marcellus Denning House holds its own discernible place among the houses of its decade and the larger era of prosperity spanning the opening decades of the twentieth century. It held the respect of citizens of Albemarle as the residence of

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Mr. Denning, whose local tenure in the textile industry and the regard of so many employees was matched by no other in length. But for those of his day, and others in the near half century since his death in 1962, it is the house's architectural presence and the character imparted by its boldly bracketed, green tiled cornices that draws admiration to this landmark of its time and place.

#### Endnotes

1. The Wiscassett Mills Company was incorporated in 1898. The "Charter and By-Laws of the Wiscassett Mills Co., Albemarle, N.C." was printed in Raleigh in 1898 by Edwards & Broughton, Printers and Binders, as a twelve-page pamphlet by the company for private distribution. The Cannon Mills Records held by Perkins Library, Duke University, contains a copy and some very few scattered business records of the company. The four incorporators and the number of shares held by each man were: James William Cannon, 200 shares; his brother David Franklin Cannon, 40 shares; John Solomon Efird, 10 shares; and K\_\_\_\_\_ J\_\_\_\_\_ Davis, 20 shares. "The business of the corporation shall be that of spinning and weaving wool, cotton and other textile productions, and manufacturing of same into cloth and fabrics, and the sale of same and of said cloth and fabrics, . . ." The incorporation was approved on 3 February 1898 by Cyrus Thompson, North Carolina Secretary of State. The Wiscassett Mills Company put its first plant into operation in 1899 and produced carded yarn. The Efird Manufacturing Company was organized in 1896 by James William Cannon and Irenus Polycarp Efird (18\_\_-19\_\_), a prominent, prosperous Stanly County resident. Polycarp Efird was the father of John Solomon Efird. The Efird company placed its first plant in operation in 1897 with 2,496 spindles producing cotton yarn. The Wiscassett and Efird plants stood on adjoining acreages in Albemarle near the station of the Yadkin Railroad. The Yadkin Railroad, a feeder line into the Southern Railway system, was placed in operation in about 1891 and linked Salisbury, a major point on the Southern Railway, and Norwood, a small town in the southeast corner of Stanly County, near the Pee Dee River, where a textile manufactory was established in the early 1890s. Short accounts of all three textile operations appear in *Stanly County: The Architectural Legacy of a Rural North Carolina County* hereinafter cited as *Stanly County*. Mr. Denning's obituary appeared on the front page of the *Stanly News And Press* on 27 March 1962.
2. Mr. Denning senior is listed in the 1860 Rockingham County Census as the head of a household of four including his wife Mary Ann, aged twenty, a son Sidney, aged one year, and his mother Mary Denning, aged fifty-two. Mr. Denning enlisted in Company L. 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment, North Carolina Troops, in Rockingham County on 3 June 1861. He was paroled at Greensboro on 4 May 1865. Marcellus Denning senior could not be located in the North Carolina censuses of 1870, 1880 or 1900.

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3. The Carolina Cotton Mills, founded by Edwin Michael Holt (1807-1884), was located on the Haw River at Carolina, a mill village located in central Alamance County, north of Burlington. It was one of the family textile concerns consolidated in the company known as Edwin M. Holt's Sons that remained in the ownership and management of his descendants. The Ossipee Cotton Mills were also located on the Haw River, northwest of Burlington. They were established by James Nathaniel Williamson (1842-1921), a son-in-law of Edwin Michael Holt and a partner in E. M. Holt's Sons, who also organized Pilot Cotton Mills in Raleigh, which operated as James N. and William H. Williamson. For a brief account of the Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company/Mills see Claudia Roberts Brown and others, *The Durham Architectural and Historic Inventory*, pp. 94-96. Listed in the bibliography. The Durham company was organized in 1884 by Julian S. Carr and J. M. Odell of Greensboro and placed in operation in 1885. Mr. Denning's rise in the ranks of the company paralleled its lucrative growth and expansion.
4. "T. M. Denning Finishes 50 Years at Wiscassett," *Stanly News And Press*, 14 March 1950.
5. For background on the lives and careers of James William and Charles Albert Cannon see entries for each in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* and "Cannon: The Story of Cannon Mills Company-90 Years of Textile Leadership and Innovation, 1887-1977," a draft, unpublished history written by John William Harden (1903-1985). According to "A History of Wiscassett Mills Company, Albemarle, N. C., 1898-1981," an unsigned four-page typescript account held by the Stanly County Public Library, John C. Leslie succeeded Mr. Cannon, after his death on 19 December 1921, and held the position until his own death in 1922 whereupon he was succeeded as president of Wiscassett Mills Company briefly by Mrs. James William Cannon and, next, Mrs. David H. (Adelaide Cannon) Blair, who was succeeded by her brother, Charles Albert Cannon.
6. For a general overview of Wiscassett Mills and the place of the manufacturing concern in Albemarle see *Stanly County*, pp. 41-42, 44, 48-50, 62, 71, 76, 80, 83, 104, 121, 126-29. Photographs of the original mill and its expansions appear on pages 71 and 127.
7. Photographs of housing for employees, supervisors, and management appears in *Stanly County*, pages 49-50, 104, 121, and 128. The first residence of Mr. Denning and his family erected ca. 1915, at 506 North Second Street, facing west across the park to the mill complex, is lost. An account of the house that is the subject of this nomination appears on pages 107-08.
8. *Ibid*, 49, 83, 127. A major addition to the plant was completed in 1929. At an unconfirmed date, possibly in about 1935 when Mr.

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Denning's eldest son, Wade Fulton Denning, assumed the superintendency of Wiscassett Mills Company, and Mr. Denning was named "general superintendent," a separate general superintendent was appointed for the knitting division centered on Montgomery Avenue. In 1940 Charles Winfred Gaddy (1880-1941) held that post.

9. In the 1900 Federal Census for Albemarle, Stanly County, Mr. Denning is one of four people in the household who have no apparent familial connection to the Bostians whose household also included nine children between the ages of one and twenty years. Mrs. Bostian was living in the house as late as 1917 when she conveyed the property to her son, J. Clyde Bostian. See Stanly County Deeds, 34/164 and 57/116.
10. Stanly County Deeds, 53/144-46. The block-deep lot had a 158-foot frontage on Second Street and a width of 177.7 feet on North Third Street. The commission is job number 210 and recorded in Mr. Asbury's job book held in the Louis H. Asbury Papers, Special Collections division, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina. No drawings for the house are known to survive. The house was lost in about the 1970s and the site is now part of a parking lot of the Annunciation Catholic Church. The granite retaining wall along North Second Street survives.
11. The house was a residence for company executives thereafter. On 9 July 1942 the Wiscassett Mills Company conveyed the house to James Alonzo Groves, the long-time secretary-treasurer of the company. Stanly County Deeds, 124/76.
12. Stanly County Deeds, 69/385-86. The original rectangular lot had a frontage of 109 feet on North Second Street and a depth of 182 feet along the south edge of Franklin Street. The lot was enlarged to its present size by the addition of a ten-foot wide strip along the full depth of the south side by a deed of 14 March 1930 from Wiscassett Mills to Mr. Denning. Stanly County Deeds, 86/516-18. The 1924 deed was executed by Joseph Franklin Cannon, vice-president and treasurer of Wiscassett Mills. The 1930 deed was signed by William Joshua Swink, vice-president of Wiscassett Mills Company. No drawings for the house are known to survive.
13. The Denning Memorial at First Street Methodist Church was job number 4710 and the date of 22 April 1947 in the Asbury job book. The remodeling of the sanctuary, described as "Alt. & Add. To Church," is job number 5315 dated 10 July 1953. See *Stanly County*, 105-06.
14. Stanly County Wills, Book 8/86-90 and Book 10/46-48. Stanly County Deeds, 361/14, 560/161, and 1145/945-48.

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15. The typed transcript of Mr. Asbury's job book records commissions dating from 1908 into 1954. This author reviewed the book to confirm work for clients in Albemarle and Stanly County to establish the context of Mr. Asbury's design of the Denning House for this nomination. Some commissions could be readily identified with standing or known lost buildings, while others could not and await identification.
16. The residence for Dr. Hall (commission #88) was Mr. Asbury's second known project in Albemarle and its drawings are dated 15 December 1911 in the job book. The well-proportioned three-bay, two-and-a-half story Colonial Revival-style brick house is enhanced with a richly molded cornice and retains a remarkable degree of integrity to the present. On 8 August 1923 Mr. Asbury produced drawings for a garage for Dr. Hall (commission #538) which stands to the rear of the house. See also *Stanly County*, 108-09.
17. Other houses of the 1920s designed by Mr. Asbury feature the use of green roof tiles, however, no known others confine its usage to the bracketed pents, as on the Denning House.
18. Certain features of the interior decoration, including the use of applied moldings on the walls of the living and dining rooms to simulate paneling, a practice of the period, appear in the interior finish of the W. H. Morrow House on West Main Street, Albemarle.
19. For a photograph of the house and an account of it and the family enclave see *Stanly County*, 123-26. It is possible that "the two-story frame house that Efird had moved on logs to South Broome Street," which stood on the site of his handsome brick house, was the house commissioned in 1911 and replaced by the new house commissioned in 1914.
20. See *Stanly County*, 104-05. The design and construction history of this appealing well-preserved house remains to be confirmed. Following the deaths of Mr. Patterson's maiden daughters, Mary Louise and Bertie Snuggs Patterson, the contents of the lavishly furnished house were sold at auction in December 1994. Mr. Patterson was a son of Ibsen Franklin Patterson (1842-1896) of China Grove, North Carolina, who was a partner with James William Cannon in the organization of the Patterson Manufacturing Company in 1893.
21. See *Stanly County*, 104. The design and construction history of this well-preserved bungalow remains to be confirmed, as does that of its neighboring houses that are also associated with the 1910s expansion.
22. See the entry for the house at 1045 Pee Dee Avenue in the National Register nomination for the Pee Dee Avenue Historic District (1997) prepared by this author. Also see *Stanly County*, 114.

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23. See Pee Dee Avenue Historic District nomination.
24. *Stanly County*, 98-99, 122.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Asbury, Louis H., Papers. Job Book. Special Collections Division, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC.
- Cannon Mills Records. William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.
- "Charter and By-Laws of the Wiscassett Mills Co., Albemarle, N.C." Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, Printers and Binders, 1898.
- Dodenhoff, Donna. *Stanly County: The Architectural Legacy of a Rural North Carolina County*. Albemarle, NC: Albemarle-Stanly County Historic Preservation Commission, 1992.
- "A History of Wiscassett Mills Company, Albemarle, N.C., 1898-1981," unsigned four-page typescript account held by the Stanly County Public Library, Albemarle, NC.
- Holt, Don S., Papers. "Cannon: The Story of Cannon Mills Company, 90 Years of Textile Leadership and Innovation, 1887-1977." Special Collections Division, J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC.
- Miller, Ann Patricia. Telephone interview with author, 14 May 2010.
- Stanly County Deeds and Death Certificates, Office of the Register of Deeds, Stanly County Courthouse, Albemarle, NC.
- Stanly County Heritage, North Carolina, Volume 1*. Albemarle, NC: Stanly County Historical Book Committee and County Heritage, Inc., 2002.
- Stanly County Wills, Office of the Clerk of Court, Estates Division, Stanly County Courthouse, Albemarle, NC.
- Stanly News and Press*. 14 March 1950, "T. M. Denning Finishes 50 Years at Wiscassett";
- 1 February 1955, "Final Rites for J. A. Groves Held at Home Saturday Afternoon";

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11 March 1960, "Cap'n Denning Observes 60<sup>th</sup> Year with Wiscassett Mills";

27 March 1962, "Thomas M. Denning Dies Thursday Evening at 92: Funeral Held Saturday" and "Cap'n Denning";

28 March 1967, "Mrs. Denning Taken By Death at Age of 94"; and

4 January 1990, "Mabel York."

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: **Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** app. 0.50 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>572815</u>	<u>3912620</u>	3	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	4	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The acreage included in this nomination is the lot outlined in bold on the enclosed Stanly County tax map, dated 12 August 2010, at a scale of one inch equals 200 feet.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is drawn to include the lot conveyed by Wiscassett Mills Company on 8 January 1924 to Thomas Marcellus Denning on which the house was built and a smaller parcel, adjoining the original lot on the south, which was conveyed by Wiscassett Mills Company on 14 March 1930 to Mr. Denning (Stanly County Deeds, 69/385-86 and 86/516-18, respectively). These lots have remained intact as the site and setting of the Denning

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House throughout the Denning family ownership, through the sale to the present owners in 2006, and to the present.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 4 June 2010

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704-462-1847

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

e-mail N/A

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Thomas Marcellus Denning House

City or Vicinity: Albemarle

County: Stanly State: North Carolina

Photographer: Davyd Foard Hood

Date Photographed: Photographs 1-4 and 11 were taken on 20 February 2010, and photographs 5-10 were taken on 12 August 2010.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1. Denning House, front, east elevation, looking west.
2. Denning House, view looking northwest onto front and south elevations.
3. Denning House, view looking northeast onto south and west, rear elevations.

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4. Denning House, view looking east/southeast onto west and north elevations showing the porte cochere.
5. Denning House, interior view, looking north from parlor/Mr.Denning's office into living room.
6. Denning House, interior view, looking southeast from the dining room into the living room.
7. Denning House, interior view, looking west/southwest from living room into stair hall.
8. Denning House, interior view, looking south/southwest into first-story bathroom with original tile floor and bathtub.
9. Denning House, interior view on second story, looking west/northwest from southeast corner bedroom into hall and through door into southwest corner bedroom refitted as a bathroom.
10. Garage, looking south/southeast onto its north, front and west elevations with driveways carrying north to Franklin Street.
11. Garage, view looking west/northwest onto south, rear and east elevations.

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

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name David E. and Brenda P. Scarboro  
street & number Post Office Box 1875 telephone 704-982-7458  
city or town Albemarle state NC zip code 28002

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.